

II.

FINGAL

RECLAIMED.

Sic vos non vobis fertis aratra, boves,

L O N D O N:

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FINGAL Reclaimed.

THIS Poem hath been given to the Public as the work of Ossian, Son of Fingal, King of Scotland. Is it not extraordinary, that, throughout the whole Poem, there should not be one circumstance to prove, that this Fingal was the King of Scotland: While, on the other hand, there are many which make it probable that he was one of the Kings of Ireland? He is called King of the lonely Hills — of the stormy Hills, and King of Morven.

The Fingallians were a Colony from the ancient Galles or Wales; they settled on the coast of Ireland, stretching from the Bay of Dublin, and the banks of the Liffy, northward. The first Object, in these parts, which presents itself to those who come from the North, or East, is the Hill of Hoath, a single and solitary Mountain, projecting into the Sea, and forming on that side the Bay of Dublin. Hence Fingal is distinguish'd by the title of King of the lonely Hill — or stormy Hill. — He is likewise stiled King of Morven. — And here, the Editor of this poem, not finding this name in the

Maps of Scotland, thinks it probable, that, as it signifies a Ridge of very high Hills, *it might have been* the ancient Name of the North-west Coast of Scotland. Might it not likewise, since their Language was the same, have been the Name of the eastern Coast of Ireland? In the Map, before me, I find on this very Coast, the Mourne Mountains. These identical letters, by a slight transposition, make our Morven. I will not charge the Editor with the change; it may have been the effect of Time. Or, perhaps, it was nothing more than the preference of a more poetical sound; as Lena, in these Songs, takes the place of Loughneagh. And here, I cannot easily forgive our Translator, who, after having so highly extolled the Versification of the Original, hath cruelly declined giving us any one example of it. Should the Reader remain unsatisfied with the reasons given for stiling Fingal King of the lonely, or stormy Hills; let us suppose, that, as he was a great Warriour, he might have extended his dominion a few miles south of Dublin; he then became Lord of the Wicklow Mountains, which perfectly justify the titles given him.—I now proceed to proofs, which rise above Conjecture.—In the 3d Page of the Poem, Swaran commands the Irish Chief, Cuchulin, to yield to him; for, says he, *none can meet Swaran in the fight but Fingal. Once we wrestled on the beach of Malmor, &c.* Now, Malmor was the name of a hill in Ulster: Thus then, Swaran, in a former Expedition, had found
Fingal

Fingal in Ireland; this will not seem strange, if it should appear that he was a * Native. In the Opening of the third Book, Cuchulin says to his Bard, *O Carril, let me hear the Song of Tura, which was sung in my Halls of Joy, when Fingal, King of Shields, was there, and glowed at the Deeds of his Fathers.* Tura was the palace of the Kings of Ulster: The Song of Tura must have recorded the exploits of the Natives: Fingal heard the Song, and *glowed at the deeds of his Fathers.*

I could draw many more Arguments from the Poem; but these I think are fully sufficient. One more, however, I will offer, as, to many, it may appear of greater force than all the rest. Fingal's Bard, or Poet Laureat, is called Ullin; the ancient name of the Province of Ulster. This custom of naming a Poet from the place of his Nativity, hath been of very ancient and general Use. Let those judge who have ever reflected on the characters of Nations, whether it be credible, that a Highland Prince should have pensioned an Irish

* I have supposed, on the strongest proofs, that Fingal was a Native of Ireland. Why then, it will be said, did he go to the aid of Cuchullan by Sea? Gentle Reader, cast your eye on the Map, and you will find, that it is a short voyage from the Bay of Dublin to that of Carickfergus, which is in the neighbourhood of Lough-Neagh, or Lena, the scene of action. It is probable, that Fingal intended to attack the Danes at Sea; for though this Expedition hath been so greatly magnified by the Irish Bards, I dare say that Swaran was little better than a Free-booter; much such another Hero as Monf. Thurot.

Bard,

Bard, had there been a single Child of the Muses in his own County.

It is evident that Poetry must have flourished exceedingly at this time in Ireland; since Ossian celebrates the hundred Bards of Cormac; but, I do not find that he ever makes mention of a Caledonian Poet. If there were poets in Scotland, and Ossian one of them, then was this a golden age; in which one nation could, without envy, do justice to another; and selfishness was not yet become the characteristic of any.

The Editor of Fingal hath shewn a very laudable love of his Country, in his Attempts to naturalize this Poem: But though I admire his Zeal, I am not an equal admirer of his Conduct. I shall justify this distinction by one example. The second Book of the poem opens in this manner: — *Connal lay by the sound of the Mountain Stream, beneath the aged Tree. A stone with its moss supported his head. Shrill through the beath of Lena, he heard the voice of Night.* On this passage the Translator makes the following remark *. — *The Scene of Connal's*

* His Remarks, in general, are no less curious than instructive. He tells us, P. 57, that the Standard of Fingal was distinguished by the Name of Sun beam, probably on account of its bright Colour, and its being studded with Gold.—The Chariot of Cuchullin was studded with Gems. Yet, in P. 3, he had told us, that the only Instrument of Martial Music, then in Use, was a Horn; before the Invention of Bagpipes.—Was it for the Credit of his Original, to remind us such a Jumble of Rudeness and Refinement. On another Occasion, taking Notice of the amiable Characters of two
5 Chiefs,

nal's repose is familiar to those who have been in the Highlands of Scotland. And yet the Scene of Con-
 nal's repose was actually on a mountain in Ireland.
 Hence it follows, that Ossian's way of painting
 the face of nature in one Country, was, by repre-
 senting those objects which are peculiar to another.
 Believe me, Mr. M'——N, had Ossian always
 painted on these principles, you might have made
 him either a Highlander or a Laplander, for me.—
 It is with the same Spirit, united with the same
 Judgment, that, not content with having made the
 principal Hero a Caledonian, our Translator hath
 laid violent hands on the second, Cuchullin was
 too great a character to be an Hibernian. What
 is he then? why, a Scotchman; Chief of the Isle
 of Sky; but, Regent of the Province of Ulster,
 during the minority of its Prince. This is suspi-
 cious; for I do not find that it was the custom in
former Times, for Scotland to furnish other nations
 with Ministers, or Regents. Their political œco-
 nomy was not of such a nature, that their neigh-
 bours should be tempted to adopt it: And, to
 speak the truth; What pretensions had those to
 preside in the Councils of other Nations, who ne-
 ver had the wit to govern their own? But, to
 wave Conjectures; Cuchullin is called, in many

Chiefs, on opposite Parties, he says, "One cannot help wishing
 them to be both victorious: As that could not well be, I should
 have wished them to have been Friends."—And, in the same Spirit
 of well-wishing, I cannot help wishing that Mr. M'——N had
 produced these Poems without Notes or *places*,

places, the blue-eyed Son of Erin*. He hath his name from the province of Ullin, which he governed. He calls the palace of Tura, his Hall; the Irish Captains, his Heroes. He never mentions the name of the minor Prince, or hints at his governing in trust. Ministers have been bold in abusing the authority of their Prince; but seldom so impolitic, as to lay aside his name.

I close these proofs with observing, that Carril, the Bard of Cuchullin, was a Son of Erin; and that, throughout the poem, he takes the lead, as a Songster of Ossian.

It is farther remarkable, that neither Hero nor Bard, throughout the whole poem, ever mentions the name of Scotland; or describes it by any peculiar circumstance. While, on the other hand, they dwell with an evident pleasure on the several names of Ireland. Add to this, that their Mistresses and their Wives are all Irish; except the Mistress of Fingal, who was of Scandinavia; and the Wife of Cuchullin, who was of the Isle of Mist; an Island so enveloped in clouds, that, I confess, I have not been able to find it†. Whatever may be

* Ear-in, the translator says, signifies the western Island. In the same Note he says, that there is the highest probability, that the Ear-in, or Ierne of the ancients was Britain to the North of the Forth.—Admirable!

† Eivirallin, the wife of Ossian, was an Hibernian. The Episodes in the Poem are founded on family anecdotes, on the Amours of the Irish: Things, which no Man could take a pleasure in relating, or be supposed to know, who was not a Native.

the force of these arguments, let us suppose, for a moment, that Fingal and his son Ossian were Highlanders; what proofs are there that Ossian was the Author of this poem? The Editor hath, in some places, of his own authority, I believe, made Ossian declare himself: Instead of Ossian did so—it is, I did so. The change was easy. But, unhappily; wherever Ossian thus speaks, it is with the most extravagant commendation of himself. As—
“ Myself, like a Rock, came down. I exulted in the strength of the King. Many were the deaths of my arm; and dismal was the gleam of my Sword, &c.”
 This is too bare-faced:—I appeal from you, Mr. M’——N, to your own Countrymen. Is this consistent with that insinuation and reserve, by which you have been in all times so justly distinguish’d? If therefore Ossian must be author of this poem, the sons of Inis-fail have some pretension to him, from a similitude of manners. It remains for the Highlanders to prove a similitude of genius.

So far for the property of the poem.

As the translator of Fingal hath, in his notes, given some examples of an extraordinary coincidence in the ideas of Ossian with those of Homer; I shall take the liberty to add some other examples, in which, this coincidence amounts *almost* to a suspicion of Plagiarism.

Fingal, first of men.—*ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων.*

The white arm'd maid.—*λευκώλενος—*

The blue-ey'd chief.—*γλαυκῶπις.*

The high bosomed fair.—*βαθυκόλπος.*

Lightning pours from their sides of steel.

————— *ἀπο χαλκῆς θεσπέσιοιο,*

Αἴγλη παμφανώσα δι' αἰθέρος ἡράνιον ἔχει.

Morna! thou fairest of maids! thou hast fallen like
a star that shoots athwart the desert, &c.

Οἶον δ' ἄστρα ἦκε Κρόνον παῖς----

Τῷ εἴκει ἦξεν ἐπὶ χθονα Παλλὰς----

Camest thou like a roe.—*ἥυτε νεῦροι.*

Thy hair like the mist of Cromla; when it curls on
the rocks, and it shines to the beam of the west.

This coloured hair is exactly described by Anacreon—

Τάμεν ἐνδοθεν μελαινας,

Τὰ δ' ἔς ἀκρον ἠλιώσας.

As rushes a stream of foam from the steep of
Cromla; when the thunder is rolling.

*Ὡς δ' ὅτ'. &c. κύμα θαλάσσης ὄρνυτ', &c. μεγάλα βρέμει
&c. ἀποπλῖναι δ' ἄλος ἀχύν.*

Like the gathered flies of evening.

Ἡῦτε μυῖων ἀδινῶν ἐθνεα, &c.

They rose like a flock of sea-fowl, their sound was
like a thousand streams, &c.

Τῶν δ' ὡς ὀρέων πετεηνῶν ἐθνεα----

Κλαγγῆν προκαθίζοντων.----

Strong-hoofed.—*μονυχᾶς ἵππης.*

Chief mixed his strokes with chief, and man with
man; steel, clanging, sounded on steel,—such

is the noise of battle—and wide poured the blood
of the valiant.

Συν ρεβαλον ρινυς, συν δ' εγγεα, και μενε ανδρων; παλυσ δ'
ορυμαγδος ορωρει; ρεε δ' αιματι γαια.

Feeble were the voices of a hundred bards.

Ουδ' ει μοι δεκα μεν γλωσσαι.—*Non mihi si linguae centum.*

In the midst of thousands he roared.

Σμερδαλεα ιαχων.

Her white arm is stained with red.

μιανθην δ' αιματι μηροι, Ευφυεες.

Who are these like two clouds, and their swords like
lightning above them?

Αμφι δε οι κεφαλη νεφος---υψοσε δ' αυγη Γιγνεται αισσησα.

Ten heroes blow the fire.

Homer, on a like occasion, employ'd but one.---

Πυρ δε Μενoitιαδης δαιεν μεγα, ισοθεος φως.

Tall as the stag of Morven moved on the king of
groves.

Ηυτε βας αγεληφι μεγ' εξοχος.---Τοιον αρ' Ατρειδην.

I should pay an ill compliment to the sagacity
and erudition of the Reader, should I enter into a
more minute detail of such examples. I shall there-
fore pass to some general observations. In the few
examples which the translator hath given of a re-
semblance between Ossian and Homer, sometimes
he does no more than hint at the passage in the
Greek, but gives the whole in the English transla-
tion. Now, as Mr. Pope is, at times, less like Ho-
mer than is Ossian himself, it should seem, as if the

Translator designed, that, in these instances, an evident imitation should pass for a casual resemblance. A Writer will often succeed, who trusts to the indolence of his Reader. Something of a like management appears in the comparisons, which, with a seeming ingenuity, are made between Ossian and our modern Poets; for, we shall observe, that the parallel is often drawn, where there is the least resemblance. For instance—*They stood on the heath, like oaks with all their branches round them; when they echo to the stream of frost, and their withered leaves rustle to the wind.*

———— As when heaven's fire
Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines
With singed tops, their stately growth, tho' bare,
Stand on the blasted heath. MILTON.

These passages are compared by the translator. But I shall take the liberty of transferring Milton's image into another parallel. — *Silent and tall, he seemed as an oak on the banks of Lubar; which had its branches blasted of old by the lightning of heaven.*

What then are we to conclude from this? That the Translator hath intermixed modern beauties with the ancient? To what purpose? Since those beauties were not his own, he could expect no other return, but to be compared with an ignorant vintner, who should mix new wine with old, to be for ever on the fret.

But,

But, the inconsistencies are there. I own it, and am at a loss to account for it. The imposition becomes incredible by its grossness; for, while the Translator laboured to establish the antiquity of his author, and to clear him from the disgrace of imitation; *surely*, he could not but foresee, that, by forcing him to adopt the thoughts and language of the moderns, he must necessarily draw on himself the imputation of ruining his original.

The Reader will see by this, how much I am inclined to acquit Mr. M'——N, of artifice. However, I cannot overlook it in one instance. He had found some scattered songs; he hath forced them into the form of a regular poem. Why so? he had presumed those songs to be Scotch; and any thing less than an Epic poem had been unworthy the Highlands. As to the several difficulties which occur in these poems, *if Mr. M'——N had no hand in producing them*, we must applaud his candour in leaving them to shift for themselves. And yet, I am persuaded, that many of his readers would have been better pleased, had he employed a little more art; and not abandoned them in a cloud of inconsistencies, dark, deep, and inexorable as the mists of Cromla*. To speak for myself, I am too much obliged

* In order to establish the antiquity of Ossian's Writings, the Translator asserts, that he had no idea of the Christian Religion. What impression the doctrine of Christianity may have made on him, we cannot tell; but, certainly, he was much delighted with the stile and images of the Sacred writings. Thus—*each hero is a pillar of*

obliged to the Translator; for the pleasure he has procured me, to call his conduct to a strict account. I am convinced that his original was a Wilderness; but, it was a Wilderness of beauties: Perhaps, it would have been as well, had they been produced in their primitive disorder. I think, that we may discover, at intervals, in these songs, the graces of a Venus of Medicis; the strength and powers of a Hercules Farnese: To be sure, those patches do not become the Venus; and the Hercules would have been better without that bonnet.

With respect to the merit of this work, considered merely as a translation; it is difficult to judge of it without comparing it with the original. Some particulars, however, are of such a nature, that we must suppose, either, that the translator did not understand his Poet; or, that the poet did not know what he wrote. For example—P. 11. Swaran having sent one of his officers to take a view of the enemy—*He went, and trembling, swift returned. His eyes rolled wildly round. His heart beat high against his side. His words were faltering, broken, slow.*

of darkness.—Ryno went on like a pillar of fire.—And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud; by night in a pillar of fire. Exod. chap. xiii. One would imagine, that the Translator might have rested here; but he goes a step farther, and insinuates that Ossian had no idea of any Religion. Thus, the Celtic Homer, as he is called, after having been first converted into a Highlander, makes his appearance at last in the character of a Savage. There is nothing which might not be expected from Mr. M——N, after that notable conjecture, that North Britain formerly went by the name of the western Island.—*Scriblerus.*

By

By what law of nature, his words should be slow, while his heart beat high, I do not know : but, sure I am, that they are far from being so in his speech. —It begins thus—*Rise, son of ocean, rise.* After this, he runs with a singular rapidity into a verbose and florid description, enriched with some of the most splendid images in the whole poem *. I suppose, that he had recovered from that violent palpitation, when he thus described the horses of Cuchullin—*The high-maned, broad-breasted, proud, high-leaping, strong steed of the hill : His name is Sulin-Sifadda.* Again—*The thin-maned, high-beaded, strong-hoofed, fleet, bounding son of the hill : His name is Dufornnal.* Within two or three pages of this, we find a simile of a *bull leaping like snow.* Ossian was bold, but not absurd, in his comparisons. It is probable, therefore, that, in the original, it was—*leaping o'er the snow* : thus, a preposterous simile is changed into a natural image. What are we to think of the *unfrequent blast roaring in narrow vales* ? Is this ancient, or modern ? We often meet, in this translation, a striking disagreement between a laboured refinement in the language, and a wildness in the original ideas. Nothing can be more unnatural in a work than a variance between the manners and the diction. I must be understood, in this place, to speak of such ideas as are genuine and original : As

* His description of the Car of Cuchullin is exceedingly beautiful. *It bends behind like a wave near a rock ; like the golden mist of the heath. Its sides are embossed with flowers, and sparkle like the Sea round the boat of night.*

to those which have been borrowed from other works, and transplanted into Fingal, Mr. M^c-N, like a diligent gardener, hath generally taken care to remove them, just as they stood; or, to use the language of this poem, with all their branches round them*. Of a third class, and very different from either of the former, are those parts, which seem to be of the translator's own growth. Of these, I conceive, is the following speech by Cuchullin—*I will never yield to man. Dark Cuchullin will be great or dead.* Would it not have been better English, had he said—Cuchullin will be great, or die? Again—*It was then by Fingal's band a hero fell, to his grief.*—To whose grief? according to grammar, and the obvious construction of the words, it must have been—to his grief, who fell. The thing was natural enough; and yet, it is not easy to read it without laughing. The writer, we guess, had a different meaning; but the first impression will have its effect. I shall spare the reader and myself the trouble of a longer scrutiny: and finish these remarks, by taking notice of the principle on which the translator sets out. He says, that he has studied simplicity: if so, I doubt he did not study his original: for, I cannot conceive that simplicity should be the distinguishing quality of a poem, in which, three ideas out of four are made

* Thus—*The low hung Vapour*—OSSIAN.

The low-hung Vapours—POPE.

The dagger glittered in his hand. He whistled as he went. OSSIAN.

And whistled as he went for want of thought. DRYDEN.

out by comparisons ; and these, in general, of the boldest cast. Simplicity, I think, consists in writing from the *immediate* impression of the idea ; the consequence of which will be an easy and natural agreement between the language and the thought. How far this is the character of the work before us, let the reader judge. But if, by studying simplicity, the Translator meant to keep clear of Wit, I am of opinion that he has succeeded beyond his expectations.



A P P E N D I X.

MR. M'—N has taken great pains to make us believe, that Fingal was the production of the High-lands : but, the whole tenor of the poem contradicted him, unless it could be proved, that North-Britain was the Ierne of the ancients. To this end, he calls in Strabo, and makes him say, that Ierne liës to the North of Britain. The Question here, was not, what Strabo thought ; but,

C

what

what Oſſian underſtood by Erin, or the Weſtern Iſland. However, I am willing to follow Mr. M'—n in his own way. The words of Strabo, in the Latin verſion, are theſe — Navigatio autem à Gallia ſeptentrionem verſus poſtrema eſſe dicitur à noſtri ſeculi hominibus, uſque in Hiberniam. That Ireland lies to the North, to thoſe who ſail to it from France, is undoubted: As to the word — poſtrema, it only proves, that the navigators from the continent had not at that time gone farther Northward. And this agrees with what Tacitus ſays, that the Geography of theſe parts was not well underſtood before the time of Agricola. — Again — Sunt et aliæ circa Britanniam inſulæ quædam parvæ cæterum ei annexa * Magna eſt Hibernia, ad ſeptentrionem expoſita: prolixa, ſed *ampliſſimam latitudinem habens*. How can theſe laſt words be applied to that part of Britain which lies north of the Forth? If by the Magna Ibernſia be underſtood a *part* of Scotland; then Ireland muſt have been one of the inſulæ parvæ. As to the words, ad ſeptentrionem expoſita, they are but a repetition of what he had ſaid before, à Gallia ſeptentrionem verſus, &c. — Laſtly, deſcribing Britain he ſays — Britannię forma eſt triangula †. —

* Annexa. — This is a blunder of the Tranſlator. In the original, the word is — *ἀντικείμενη* — Oppoſita. Mr. M'—n muſt have adopted this miſtake, when he made North-Britain the Ierne of Strabo —

† Inſula natura eſt triquetra. — Cæſ. Com.

Whence

Whence it is evident, that, by Britain, he understood England and Scotland united; even to the extremity of the Highlands. The uncertainty in this matter arises entirely from Strabo's inaccurate manner of expressing himself. If, notwithstanding, Mr. M'—N should still make use of his authority for fixing the name of Hibernia on Scotland; he must, on the same authority, admit the justness of the character given of its inhabitants: If so, I shall leave him in the quiet possession of both—*Illius sunt incolæ, Anthropophagi, id est, hominum carne vescentes, manduconelque magni. Nec minus alienis in propatulo uxoribus immisceri, matribus etiam atque sororibus.* In English thus! The inhabitants of this County (North-Britain) feed on human flesh: they are insatiable gluttons: they live in the promiscuous use of women, not abstaining even from their mothers and sisters.

Had Mr. M'—N aimed at truth *, he would have preferred the authority of Cæsar, or of Tacitus: the former of whom wrote just before Strabo; the latter, not long after him. These authors were better informed; they express themselves clearly; they describe England and Scotland as one Island; and place Hibernia just where it should be. But, the following passage, in Cæsar, would not have answered Mr. M'—N's purpose.—*Hoc latus (Britanniæ) vergit ad Hispaniam, at-*

* It is expected from Mr. M'—N, that he should lodge his Original in some one of the public Libraries.

que occidentem solem, qua ex parte est Hibernia. With regard to Tacitus; who was better informed than any of his predecessors, he makes no distinction between Scotchmen and Britons; but calls them, by one common name, Britannos. A circumstance very unfavourable to Mr. M'——N's scheme; but, perfectly coinciding with the present political pretensions of his Countrymen. For which reason, as this observation of mine may be of some service to them in a point which they have so much at heart; I hope, that, on this account, they will pardon the objections which I have made to their poetical pretensions.

